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THE WISDOM OF OSCAR WILDE

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THE WISDOM OF OSCAR WILDE

NOTE

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THE WISDOM OF OSCAR WILDE

SELECTED WITH INTRODUCTION AND INDEX

BY

TEMPLE SCOTT

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OSCAR WILDE, the man, is dead. No man dare adventure in rebellion against the Society of his fellow-men unless he aim high. And even then he may often meet death, and should expect it. But Oscar Wilde's revolt was not of this order. It sent him biting the dust and chewing the bitter cud of salutary repentance. It was a mere laugh of silly derision, a mere skipping of a satyr's hoofs, a paltry snapping of the fingers in the face of decency, the ridiculous antics of a spoilt and pampered youth. We waste our time in giving it even the consideration of a reference, except to note that that part of Oscar Wilde is dead and will soon have become the dust from which it came. If haply, it feed some rose to bloom redder, that is as much as need concern us.

But the writings of Oscar Wilde, those emanations of the real being that gave life to the artist and constituted what we call his "soul", if these have anything in them that is for us, not only should we not reject it, but it is for our necessity and

our salvation that we accept it. The dust of Imperial Cæsar may "patch a wall t'expel the winter's flaw," but his soul must go on through the ages, because it is of that fire which consumes those who attempt to extinguish it.

To speak thus by way of comparison is hardly an exaggeration. The author of "Intentions" and "The Soul of Man Under Socialism" enunciated a new theory of art and a new dogma of life. He revalued our values with the insight of genius; and if he sometimes indulged himself in persiflage it was by way of aside and due to the humorous play of the Irishman in him. He was a creator of no mean order as his *Poems* amply testify. There is no more directly appealing ballad in the English language than that of "Reading Gaol." His power of dramatic composition is extraordinary in his plays, and the lovely allegories and tales of the "Happy Prince" and "The House of Pomegranates" are among the masterpieces of that class of literature.

But I do not wish now to attempt a detailed appreciation of the works of Oscar Wilde. I wish simply to ask the reader to judge for himself and see if he can not find in what is here presented to him a justification for their preservation.

"Society, as we have constituted it, will have no place for me, has none to offer; but Nature, whose sweet rains fall on unjust and just alike, will have clefts in the rock where I may hide, and sweet valleys in whose silence I may weep undisturbed. She will hang the night with stars so that I may walk abroad in the darkness without stumbling, and send the wind over my footprints so that none may track me to my hurt; she will cleanse me in great waters, and with bitterness make me whole."

These words should not appeal to us in vain. Let us take the part Nature takes and receive him with passionless courtesy. Let us not play with the fire of this soul. We owe it a temple. If, by chance, some reader of this little book shall find it

worthy, he may rest assured that he is doing justice to himself as well as to the writer; he is but paying homage to a thinker and an artist. Let him rather give thanks that he has that in him which is not only able to be just but also free to accept that which is true. Nothing so finely touches us to fine issues as a fine spirit—and the spirit of Oscar Wilde is fine indeed.

TEMPLE SCOTT.

Marriage

IT is a curious thing about the game of marriage—a game, by the way, that is going out of fashion—the wives hold all the honours and invariably lose the odd trick. *Lady Windermere's Fan.*

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Women

WOMEN are pictures; men are problems: if you want to know what a woman really means, look at her, don't listen to her. *A Woman of No Importance.*

ALL women become like their mothers—that is their tragedy. No man does. That's his. *The Importance of Being Earnest.*

THERE is only one real tragedy in a woman's life. The fact that her past is always her lover, and her future invariably her husband. *An Ideal Husband.*

AMERICA is a Paradise for women—that is why, like Eve, the American

women are extremly anxious to get out of it. *A Woman of No Importance.*

MEN always want to be a woman's first love—women like to be a man's last romance. *A Woman of No Importance.*

ONE should never trust a woman who tells her own age. A woman who would tell that would tell anything. *A Woman of No Importance.*

WOMEN have a much better time than men in this world; there are far more things forbidden them. A *Woman of No Importance.*

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The Poet—the Artistic Spirit in the Choice of Subject—the Spectator of all Time and all Existence

LIKE the philosopher of the platonic vision, the poet is the spectator of all time and all existence. For him no form is obsolete, no subject out of date; rather, whatever of life and passion the world has known in the desert of Judea or in Arcadian valley, by the ruins of Troy or Damascus, in the crowded and hideous

streets of the modern city, or by the pleasant ways of Camelot, all lies before him like an open scroll, all is still instinct with beautiful life. He will take of it what is salutary for his own spirit, choosing some facts and rejecting others, with a calm artistic control of one who is in possession of the secret of beauty . . . Art is very life itself and knows nothing of death. And so it comes that he who seems to stand most remote from his age is he who mirrors it best, because he has stripped life of that mist of familiarity which, as Shelley used to say, makes life obscure to us. *Lecture on the English Renaissance.*

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FOR there is something Hellenic in your air and world, something that has a quicker breath of the joy and power of Elizabeth's England about it than our ancient civilisation can give us. For you, at least, are young; no hungry generations weigh you down, and the past does not

America, Perhaps to be the Perfecter of the Movement of the English Renaissance in Art

mock you with the ruins of a beauty, the secret of whose creation you have lost. That very absence of tradition which Ruskin thought would rob your rivers of their laughter and your flowers of their light may be rather the source of your freedom and strength. To speak in literature with the perfect rectitude of the movement of animals, and the unimpeachableness of the sentiments of tree, and grass by the roadside, has been defined by one of your poets as the flawless triumph of art; it is a triumph which you above all other nations may be destined to achieve. For the voices that have their dwelling in sea and mountain are not the chosen music of liberty only. Other messages are there, if you will but listen to them—may yield you the splendour of some new imagination, and the marvel of some new liberty. *Lecture on the English Renaissance.*

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Suffering

SUFFERING is really a revelation. One discerns things one never dis-

cerned before. One approaches the whole of history from a different standpoint. What one had felt dimly, through instinct, about art, is intellectually and emotionally realised with perfect clearness of vision and absolute intensity of apprehension. *De Profundis.*

"Who never ate his bread in sorrow,
Who never spent the midnight hours
Weeping and waiting for the morrow,—
He knows you not, ye heavenly powers."

++

The aim of the artist is best realised through sorrow

I NOW see that sorrow, being the supreme emotion of which man is capable, is at once the type and test of all great art. What the artist is always looking for is the mode of existence in which soul and body are one and indivisible: in which the outward is expressive of the inward: in which form reveals. *De Profundis.*

++

Sorrow the ultimate type in life and in art

BEHIND joy and laughter there may be a temperament, coarse, hard, and callous. But behind sorrow there is always sorrow. Pain, unlike pleasure, wears

Truth in Art

no mask. Truth in art is not any correspondence between the essential idea and the accidental existence. . . . Truth in art is the unity of a thing with itself: the outward rendered expressive of the inward: the soul made incarnate: the body instinct with spirit. For this reason there is no truth comparable to sorrow . . . out of sorrow have the worlds been built, and at the birth of a child or a star there is pain. *De Profundis.*

++

The Complete Man The Perfect Personality

IT is a question whether we have ever seen the full expression of a personality, except on the imaginative plane of art. In action we never have. Cæsar, says Mommsen, was the complete and perfect man. But how tragically insecure was Cæsar! Wherever there is a man who exercises authority, there is a man who resists authority. Cæsar was very perfect, but his perfection travelled by too dangerous a road. Marcus Aurelius was the perfect man, says Renan. Yes; the

The man who exercises authority is the man who resists authority

great emperor was a perfect man. But how intolerable were the endless claims upon him! He staggered under the burden of the empire. He was conscious how inadequate one man was to bear the weight of that Titan and too vast orb. What I mean by a perfect man is one who develops under perfect conditions; one who is not wounded, or worried, or maimed, or in danger. Most personalities have been obliged to be rebels. Half their strength has been wasted in friction . . . It will be a marvellous thing —the true personality of man—when we see it. It will grow naturally and simply, flower-like, or as a tree grows. It will not be at discord. It will never argue or dispute. It will not prove things. It will know everything. And yet it will not busy itself about knowledge. It will have wisdom. Its value will not be measured by material things. It will have nothing. And yet it will have everything, and whatever one takes from it, it will still have, so rich will it be.

It will not be always meddling with others, or asking them to be like itself. It will love them because they will be different. And yet, while it will not meddle with others, it will help all, as a beautiful thing helps us by being what it is. The personality of man will be very wonderful. It will be as wonderful as the personality of a child. *The Soul of Man under Socialism.*

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Man's Real Perfection

THE true perfection of man lies, not in what man has, but in what man is . . . Nothing should be able to harm a man except himself. Nothing should be able to rob a man at all. What a man really has, is what is in him. What is outside of him should be a matter of no importance. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

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The Evils of Altruism

NOW and then, in the course of the century, a great man of science, like Darwin; a great poet, like Keats; a fine

critical spirit, like M. Renan; a supreme artist, like Flaubert, has been able to isolate himself, to keep himself out of reach of the clamorous claims of others, to stand "under the shelter of the wall," as Plato puts it, and so to realise the perfection of what was in him, to his own incomparable gain, and to the incomparable and lasting gain of the whole world. These, however,. are exceptions. The majority of people spoil their lives by an unhealthy and exaggerated altruism—are forced, indeed, so to spoil them. They find themselves surrounded by hideous poverty, by hideous ugliness, by hideous starvation. It is inevitable that they should be strongly moved by all this. The emotions of man are stirred more quickly than man's intelligence; and, . . . it is much more easy to have sympathy with suffering than it is to have sympathy with thought. Accordingly, with admirable, though misdirected intentions, they very seriously and very sentimentally set themselves to the task of remedying the evils

that they see. But their remedies do not cure the disease: they merely prolong it. Indeed, their remedies are part of the disease.

They try to solve the problem of poverty, for instance, by keeping the poor alive; or, in the case of a very advanced school, by amusing the poor.

But this is not a solution: it is an aggravation of the difficulty. The proper aim is to try and reconstruct society on such a basis that poverty will be impossible. And the altruistic virtues have really prevented the carrying out of this aim . . .

The people who do most harm are the people who try to do most good . . .

charity degrades and demoralizes . . .

charity creates a multitude of sins . . .

It is immoral to use private property in order to alleviate the horrible evils that result from the institution of private property. It is both immoral and unfair. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

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Dress of Inmates of Prisons

OUR very dress makes us grotesque. We are the zanies of sorrow. We are clowns whose hearts are broken . . . To those who are in prison tears are a part of every day's experience. A day in prison on which one does not weep is a day on which one's heart is hard, not a day on which one's heart is happy. *De Profundis.*

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The Philistine

THE Philistine element in life is not the failure to understand art. . . He is the Philistine who upholds and aids the heavy, cumbrous, blind, mechanical forces of society, and who does not recognise dynamic force when he meets it either in a man or a movement. *De Profundis.*

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Relation of the Artistic Life to Conduct

A MAN whose desire is to be something separate from himself, to be a member of Parliament, or a successful grocer, or a prominent lawyer or a judge, or something equally tedious, invariably succeeds in being what he wants to be.

That is his punishment. Those who want a mask have to wear it.

But with the dynamic forces of life, and those in whom those dynamic forces become incarnate, it is different. People whose desire is solely for self-realisation never know where they are going. They can't know. . . . The final mystery is oneself. When one has weighed the sun in the balance, and measured the steps of the moon, and mapped out the seven heavens star by star, there still remains oneself. Who can calculate the orbit of one's own soul? When the son went out to look for his father's asses, he did not know that a man of God was waiting for him with the very chrism of coronation, and that his own soul was already the soul of a King. *De Profundis.*

The Soul of a Man is Unknowable

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Friendship the Right to Share Another's Sorrow

IF a friend of mine . . . gave a feast, and did not invite me to it, I should not mind a bit . . . But if . . . a friend of mine had a sorrow and refused

to allow me to share it, I should feel it most bitterly. If he shut the doors of the house of mourning against me, I would move back again and again and beg to be admitted, so that I might share in what I was entitled to share. If he thought me unworthy, unfit to weep with him, I should feel it as the most poignant humiliation, as the most terrible mode for which disgrace could be inflicted on me . . . he who can look on the loveliness of the world and share its sorrow, and realise something of the wonder of both, is in immediate contact with divine things, and has got as near to God's secret as any one can get. *De Profundis.*

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Soul and Body—One

THOSE who see any difference between soul and body, have neither. *Phrases and Philosophies for the use of the Young.*

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Contradiction

THE well-bred contradict other people. The wise contradict themselves.

Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young.

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Style Essential

IN all unimportant matters, style, not sincerity, is the essential. In all important matters, style, not sincerity, is the essential. In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing. *Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young.*

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Industry

INDUSTRY is the root of all ugliness. *Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young.*

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The Three Ages

THE old believe everything; the middle-aged suspect everything; the young know everything. *Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young.*

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Reading

IT is absurd to have a hard-and-fast rule about what one should read and what one shouldn't. More than half of modern

culture depends on what one shouldn't read. *Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young.*

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Women

WOMEN have a wonderful instinct about things. They can discover everything except the obvious. In the case of a very fascinating woman, sex is a challenge, not a defence. *Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young.*

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The Poet of Joy

THE most joyous poet is not he who sows the desolate highways of this world with the barren seed of laughter, but he who makes his sorrow most musical, this indeed being the meaning of joy in art—that incommunicable element of artistic delight which, in poetry for instance, comes from what Keats called, the "sensuous life of verse," the element of song in the singing, made so pleasurable to us by that wonder of motion which often has its origin in mere musical im-

pulse, and in painting is to be sought for, from the subject never, but from the pictorial charm only . . . *L'Envoi to "Rose Leaf and Apple Leaf."*

++

Artistic Expression in Painting

REJECTS all literary reminiscence and all metaphysical idea, is in itself entirely satisfying to the æsthetic sense—is, as the Greeks would say, an end in itself . . . the art whose subject cannot be separated from the method of its expression; the art which most completely realises for us the artistic ideal . . . the rule of art is not the rule of morals. In an ethical system, indeed, of any gentle mercy good intentions will, one is fain to fancy, have their recognition; but of those that would enter the serene House of Beauty the question that we ask is not what they had ever meant to do, but what they had done. Their pathetic intentions are of no value to us, but their realised creations only. *L'Envoi to "Rose Leaf and Apple Leaf."*

NOR, in looking at a work of art, should we be dreaming of what it symbolises but rather loving it for what it is. Indeed, the transcendental spirit is alien to the spirit of Art. The metaphysical mind of Asia may create for itself the monstrous and many-breasted idol, but to the Greek, pure artist, that work is most instinct with spiritual life which conforms most closely to the perfect facts of physical life also. Nor, in its primary aspect, has a painting, for instance, any more spiritual message or meaning for us than a blue tile from the wall of Damascus, or a Hitzen vase. It is a beautifully coloured surface, nothing more, and affects us by no suggestion stolen from philosophy, no pathos pilfered from literature, no feeling filched from a poet, but by its own incommunicable artistic essence—by that selection of truth which we call style, and that relation of values which is the draughtsmanship of painting, by the whole quality of the workmanship, the arabesque of the design, the splendour of the colour; for these things

are enough to stir the most divine and remote of the chords which make music in our soul; and colour, indeed, is of itself a mystical presence in things, and tone a kind of sentiment. *L'Envoi to "Rose Leaf and Apple Leaf."*

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Sincerity and Constancy in Art. Constancy in Belief

SINCERITY and constancy will the artist indeed, have always; but sincerity in art is merely that plastic perfection of execution without which a poem or a painting, however noble its sentiment or human its origin, is but wasted and unreal work, and the constancy of the artist cannot be to any definite rules or system of living, but to that principle of beauty through which the inconstant shadows of his life are, in their most fleeting moment, arrested and made permanent. He will not, for instance, in intellectual matters, acquiesce in that facile orthodoxy of our day which is so reasonable and so artistically uninteresting: nor yet will he desire that fiery faith of the antique time

which, while it intensified, yet limited the vision; still less will he allow the calm of his culture to be marred by the discordant despair of doubt or the sadness of a sterile skepticism; for the Valley Perilous, where ignorant armies clash by night, is no resting place meet for her to whom the gods have assigned the clear upland, the serene height, and the sunlit air. Rather will he be always curiously testing new forms of belief, tingeing his nature with the sentiment that still lingers about some beautiful creeds, and, searching for experience itself, and not for the fruits of experience, when he has got its secret, he will leave without regret, much that was once very precious to him. *L'Envoi to "Rose Leaf and Apple Leaf."*

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Charity

WE are often told that the poor are grateful for charity. Some of them are, no doubt, but the best amongst the poor are never grateful. They are ungrateful, discontented, disobedient, and re-

bellious. They are quite right to be so. Charity they feel to be a ridiculously inadequate mode of partial restitution, or a sentimental dole, usually accompanied by some impertinent attempt on the part of the sentimentalists to tyrannise over their private lives. Why should they be grateful for the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table? They should be seated at the board, and are beginning to know it. As for being discontented, a man who would not be discontented with such surroundings, and such a low mode of life would be a perfect brute. Disobedience, in the eyes of any one who has read history, is man's original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made, through disobedience and through rebellion. Sometimes the poor are praised for being thrifty. But to recommend thrift to the poor is both grotesque and insulting. It is like advising a man who is starving to eat less. For a town or country labourer to practice thrift would be absolutely immoral. Man should not be ready to show

Discontent in the poor a healthy sign

Disobedience man's original virtue

Thrift to the poor is asking a starving man to eat less

that he can live like a badly-fed animal. He should decline to live like that. . . No: a poor man who is ungrateful, unthrifty, discontented, and rebellious is probably a real personality, and has much in him. He is, at any rate, a healthy protest. *The Soul of Man under Socialism.*

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Autobiographies

I MUST confess that I like all memoirs. I like them for their form, just as much as for their matter. In literature mere egotism is delightful. It is what fascinates us in the letters of personalities so different as Cicero and Balzac, Flaubert and Berlioz, Byron and Madame de Sévigné. Whenever we come across it, and, strangely enough, it is rather rare, we cannot but welcome it, and do not easily forget it. Humanity will always love Rousseau for having confessed his sins, not to a priest, but to the world, and the couchant nymphs that Cellini wrought in bronze for the castle of King Francis, the

green and gold Perseus, even, that in the open Loggia at Florence shows the moon the dead terror that once turned life to stone, have not given it more pleasure than has that autobiography in which the supreme scoundrel of the Renaissance relates the story of his splendour and his shame. The opinions, the character, the achievements of the man, matter very little. He may be a sceptic like the gentle Sieur de Montaigne, or a saint like the bitter son of Monica, but when he tells us his own secrets he can always charm our ears to listening and our lips to silence. The mode of thought that Cardinal Newman represented—if that can be called a mode of thought which seeks to solve intellectual problems by a denial of the supremacy of intellect—may not, cannot I think, survive. But the world will never weary of watching that troubled soul in its progress from darkness to darkness. The lonely church at Littlemore, where "the breath of the morning is damp, and worshippers are few," will always be dear

to it, and whenever men see the yellow snapdragon blossoming on the wall of Trinity they will think of that gracious undergraduate who saw in the flower's sure recurrence a prophecy that he would abide forever with the Benign Mother of his days—a prophecy that Faith, in her wisdom or her folly, suffered not to be fulfilled. Yes; autobiography is irresistible. Poor, silly, conceited Mr. Secretary Pepys has chattered his way into the circle of the Immortals, and, conscious that indiscretion is the better part of valour, bustles about among them in that "shaggy purple gown with gold buttons and looped lace" which he is so fond of describing to us, perfectly at his ease, and prattling, to his own and our infinite pleasure, of the Indian blue petticoat that he bought for his wife, of the "good hog's harslet," and the "pleasant French fricassee of veal" that he loved to eat, of his game of bowls with Will Joyce, and his "gadding after beauties," and his reciting of *Hamlet* on a Sunday, and his playing of the viol on week days,

and other wicked or trivial things. Even in actual life egotism is not without its attractions. When people talk to us about others they are usually dull. When they talk to us about themselves they are nearly always interesting, and if one could shut them up, when they become wearisome, as easily as one can shut up a book of which one has grown wearied, they would be perfect absolutely. *Intentions. The Critic as Artist.*

++

Art is the Product of Deliberate Self-Consciousness

ALL fine imaginative work is self-conscious and deliberate. No poet sings because he must sing. At least no great poet does. A great poet sings because he chooses to sing. It is so now, and it has always been so. We are sometimes apt to think that the voices that sounded at the dawn of poetry were simpler, fresher, and more natural than ours, and that the world which the early poets looked at, and through which they worked, had a kind of poetical quality of its own, and almost

without changing could pass into song. The snow lies thick now upon Olympus, and its steep scarped sides are bleak and barren, but once, we fancy, the white feet of the Muses brushed the dew from the anemones in the morning, and at evening came Apollo to sing to the shepherds in the vale. But in this we are merely lending to other ages what we desire, or think we desire, for our own. Our historical sense is at fault. Every century that produces poetry is, so far, an artificial century, and the work that seems to us to be the most natural and simple product of its time is always the result of the most self-conscious effort. *Intentions. The Critic as Artist.*

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The Influence of Prison and Prison Life on Society

I KNOW not whether Laws be right,
Or whether Laws be wrong;
All that we know who lie in gaol
Is that the wall is strong;
And that each day is like a year,
A year whose days are long.

But this I know, that every Law
That men have made for Man,
Since first Man took his brother's life,
And the sad world began,
But straws the wheat and saves the chaff
With a most evil fan.

This too I know—and wise it were
If each could know the same—
That every prison that men build
Is built with bricks of shame,
And bound with bars lest Christ should see
How men their brothers maim.

With bars they blur the gracious moon,
And blind the goodly sun:
And they do well to hide their Hell,
For in it things are done
That Son of God nor Son of Man
Ever should look upon!

* * * * * *

The vilest deeds like poison words
Bloom well in prison-air:

It is only what is good in Man
That wastes and withers there:
Pale Anguish keeps the heavy gate,
And the Warder is Despair.

For they starve the little frightened child
Till it weeps both night and day:
And they scourge the weak, and flog the fool,
And gibe the old and gray,
And some grow mad, and all grow bad,
And none a word may say.

Each narrow cell in which we dwell
Is a foul and dark latrine,
And the fetid breath of living Death
Chokes up each grated screen,
And all, but Lust, is turned to dust
In Humanity's machine.

The brackish water that we drink
Creeps with a loathsome slime,
And the bitter bread they weigh in scales
Is full of chalk and lime,

And Sleep will not lie down, but walks
Wild-eyed, and cries to Time.

* * * * * *

And every human heart that breaks,
In prison-cell or yard,
Is as that broken box that gave
Its treasure to the Lord,
And filled the unclean leper's house
With the scent of costliest nard.

Ah! happy they whose hearts can break
And peace of pardon win:
How else may man make straight his plan
And cleanse his soul from Sin?
How else but through a broken heart
May Lord Christ enter in?

The Ballad of Reading Gaol.

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Sympathy

SYMPATHY with pain is not the highest form of sympathy. . . Anyone can sympathise with the sufferings of a friend, but it requires a very fine nature . . . to sympathise with a friend's

success. . . Sympathy with joy intensifies the sum of joy in the world. . . Sympathy with pain does not really diminish the amount of pain. *The Soul of Man under Socialism.*

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Good Advice

IT is always a silly thing to give advice, but to give good advice is absolutely fatal. *The Portrait of Mr. W. H.*

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Oscar Wilde

TO drift with every passion till my soul
Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play,
Is it for this that I have given away
Mine ancient wisdom, and austere control?
Methinks my life is a twice-written scroll
Scrawled over on some boyish holiday
With idle songs for pipe and virelay,
Which do but mar the secret of the whole.
Surely there was a time I might have trod
The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance

Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of
God:
Is that time dead? lo! with a little rod
I did but touch the honey of romance—
And must I lose a soul's inheritance?

Poems.

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Individualism—What It Asks and What It Promises

INDIVIDUALISM does not come to man with any sickly cant about duty, which merely means doing what other people want because they want it; or any hideous cant about self-sacrifice, which is merely a survival of savage meditation. In fact, it does not come to man with any claims upon him at all. It comes naturally and inevitably out of man. It is the point to which all development tends. It is the differentiation to which all organisms grow. It is the perfection that is inherent in every mode of life, and towards which every mode of life quickens. And so Individualism exercises no compulsion over man. On the contrary, it says to man that he should suffer no compulsion to be exer-

It is the Law of Life

cised over him. It does not try to force people to be good. It knows that people are good when they are left alone. Man will develop Individualism out of himself. Man is now so developing Individualism. To ask whether Individualism is practical is like asking whether Evolution is practical. Evolution is the law of life, and there is no Evolution except towards Individualism. Where this tendency is not expressed, it is a case of artificially-arrested growth, or of disease, or of death. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

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Selfishness and Unselfishness

SELFISHNESS is not living as one wishes to live; it is asking others to live as one wishes to live. And unselfishness is letting other people's lives alone, not interfering with them. Selfishness always aims at creating around it an absolute uniformity of type. Unselfishness recognises infinite variety of type as a delightful thing, accepts it, acquiesces in it, enjoys it. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

George Meredith

THERE are better artists in France but France has no one whose view of life is so large, so varied, so imaginatively true. There are tellers of stories in Russia who have a more vivid sense of what pain in fiction may be. But to him belongs philosophy in fiction. His people not merely live, but they live in thought. One can see them from myriad points of view. They are suggestive. There is soul in them and around them. They are interpretative and symbolic. And he who made them, those wonderful quickly-moving figures, made them for his own pleasure, and has never asked the public what they wanted, has never cared to know what they wanted, has never allowed the public to dictate to him or influence him in any way, but has gone on intensifying his own personality, and producing his own individual work. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

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THERE is the despot who tyrannises over the body. There is the despot who tyrannises over the soul. There is the despot who tyrannises over soul and body alike. The first is called the Prince. The second is called the Pope. The third is called the People. The Prince may be cultivated. Many Princes have been. Yet in the Prince there is danger. One thinks of Dante at the bitter feast in Verona, of Tasso in Ferrara's madman's cell. It is better for the artist not to live with Princes. The Pope may be cultivated. Many Popes have been; the bad Popes have been. The bad Popes loved Beauty, almost as passionately, nay, with as much passion as the good Popes hated Thought. To the wickedness of the Papacy humanity owes much. The goodness of the Papacy owes a terrible debt to humanity. Yet, though the Vatican has kept the rhetoric of its thunders and lost the rod of its lightning, it is better for the artist not to live with Popes. . . There is danger in Popes. And as for the People, what of

The Three Despots

The Prince, The Pope, The People

them and their authority? . . . Their authority is a thing blind, deaf, hideous, grotesque, tragic, amazing, serious and obscene. It is impossible for the artist to live with the People. All despots bribe. The People bribe and brutalise. Who told them to exercise authority? They were made to live, to listen, and to love. Someone has done them a great wrong. They have marred themselves by imitation of their inferiors. They have taken the sceptre of the Prince. How should they use it? They have taken the triple tiara of the Pope. How should they carry its burden? They are as a clown whose heart is broken. They are as a priest whose soul is not yet born. Let all who love Beauty pity them. Though they themselves love not Beauty, yet let them pity themselves. Who taught them the trick of tyranny? *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

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THE past is of no importance. The present is of no importance. It is with the future that we have to deal. For the past is what man should not have been. The present is what man ought not to be. The future is what artists are. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

The Past, The Present, The Future

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FOR what is a practical scheme? A practical scheme is either a scheme that is already in existence, or a scheme that could be carried out under existing conditions. But it is exactly the existing conditions that one objects to; and any scheme that could accept these conditions is wrong and foolish. The conditions will be done away with, and human nature will change. The only thing that one really knows about human nature is that it changes. Change is the one quality we can predicate of it. The systems that fail are those that rely on the permanency of human nature, and not on its growth and development. The error of Louis XIV

Individualism Desirable just because it is Unpractical

was that he thought human nature would always be the same. The result of his error was the French Revolution. It was an admirable result. All the results of the mistakes of governments are quite admirable. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

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The Drama as Art

AN educated person's ideas of Art are drawn naturally from what Art has been, whereas the new work of Art is beautiful by being what Art has never been; and to measure it by the standard of the past is to measure it by a standard on the rejection of which its real perfection depends. A temperament capable of receiving, through an imaginative medium, and under imaginative conditions, new and beautiful impressions is the only temperament that can appreciate a work of Art. And true as this is in the case of the appreciation of sculpture and painting, it is still more true of the appreciation of such arts as the drama. For a picture and a statue are not at war with Time.

The Work of Art is to Dominate the Spectator: The Spectator is not to Dominate the Work of Art

They take no count of its succession. In one moment this unity may be apprehended. In the case of literature it is different. This must be traversed before the unity of effect is realized. And so, in the drama, there may occur in the first act of the play something whose real artistic value may not be evident to the spectator till the third or fourth act is reached. Is the silly fellow to get angry and call out, and disturb the play, and annoy the artists? No. The honest man is to sit quietly, and know the delightful emotions of wonder, curiosity, and suspense. He is not to go to the play to lose a vulgar temper. He is to go to the play to realise an artistic temperament. He is to go to the play to gain an artistic temperament. He is one who is admitted to contemplate the work of art, and, if the work be fine, to forget in its contemplation all the egotism that mars him—the egotism of his ignorance, or the egotism of his information. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

Beauty in the Eyes of the Public

A FRESH mode of Beauty is absolutely distasteful to the public, and whenever it appears they get so angry and bewildered that they always use two stupid expressions—one is that the work of art is grossly unintelligible; the other that the work of art is grossly immoral. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

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The Popular Novel

THE popular novel that the public calls healthy is always a thoroughly unhealthy production, and what the public calls an unhealthy novel is always a beautiful and healthy work of art. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

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The Press

IN the old days men had the rack. Now they have the press. That is an improvement certainly. But still it is very bad, and wrong, and demoralising. Somebody—was it Burke?—called journalism the fourth estate. That was true at the time, no doubt. But at the present mo-

ment it really is the only estate. It has eaten up the other three. . . we are dominated by Journalism. In America the President reigns for four years, and Journalism governs for ever and ever. Fortunately, in America, Journalism has carried its authority to the grossest and most brutal extreme. As a natural consequence it has begun to create a spirit of revolt . . . it is no longer the real force it was. It is not seriously treated. . . . In centuries before ours the public nailed the ears of journalists to the pump. That was quite hideous. In this century journalists have nailed their own ears to the key hole. . . The journalists who are most to blame are not the amusing journalists who write for what are called society papers. The harm is done by the serious, thoughtful, earnest journalists, who solemnly . . . drag before the eyes of the public . . . the private life of man. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

The Only, not the Fourth Estate

The Outcome of the Public's Insatiable Curiosity to Know Everything, Except what is Worth Knowing

A WORK of art is the unique result of a unique temperament. Its beauty comes from the fact that the author is what he is. It has nothing to do with the fact that other people want what they want. Indeed, the moment that an artist takes notice of what other people want, and tries to supply the demand, he ceases to be an artist, and becomes a dull or an amusing craftsman, an honest or a dishonest tradesman. He has no further claim to be considered as an artist. Art is the most intense mode of individualism that the world has known. I am inclined to say that it is the only real mode of individualism that the world has known. Crime, which, under certain conditions, may seem to have created individualism, must take cognisance of other people and interfere with them. But alone, without any reference to his neighbour, without any interference, the artist can fashion a beautiful thing; and if he does not do it solely for his own pleasure, he is not an

artist at all. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

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The Public and Art

ART should never try to be popular. The public should try to make itself artistic . . . In England, the arts that have escaped best are the arts in which the public takes no interest . . . We have been able to have fine poetry in England because the public do not read it, and consequently do not influence it . . . The public dislike novelty because they are afraid of it. It represents to them a mode of Individualism, an assertion on the part of the artist that he selects his own subject, and treats it as he chooses. The public are quite right in their attitude. Art is Individualism, and Individualism is a disturbing and disintegrating force. Therein lies its immense value. For what it seeks to disturb is monotony of type, slavery of custom, tyranny of habit, and the reduction of man to the level of a machine. In Art, the public accept what has been, be-

The Public Swallows its Classics Whole and Never Tastes Them

cause they cannot alter it, not because they appreciate it. They swallow their classics whole, and never taste them. They endure them as the inevitable, and, as they cannot mar them, they mouth about them. . . . The public make use of the classics of a country as a means of checking the progress of art. They degrade the classics into authorities. They use them as bludgeons for preventing the free expression of Beauty in new towns. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

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Government Degrading

ALL modes of government are failures. Despotism is unjust to everybody, including the despot, who was probably made for better things. Oligarchies are unjust to the many, and ochlocracies are unjust to the few. High hopes were once formed of democracy; but democracy means simply the bludgeoning of the people by the people for the people. It has been found out. I must say that it was high time, for all authority is quite de-

grading. It degrades those who exercise it, and degrades those over whom it is exercised. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

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Punishment and Crime

A COMMUNITY is infinitely more brutalised by the habitual employment of punishment than it is by the occasional occurrence of crime . . . the more punishment is inflicted the more crime is produced . . . The less punishment the less crime. Where there is no punishment at all, crime will either cease to exist, or, if it occurs, will be treated by physicians as a very distressing form of dementia, to be cured by care and kindness. For what are called criminals nowadays are not criminals at all. Starvation, and not sin, is the parent of modern crime. That indeed is the reason why our criminals are, as a class, so absolutely uninteresting from any psychological point of view. They are not marvellous Macbeths and terrible Vautrins. They are

merely what ordinary, respectable, commonplace people would be if they had not got enough to eat. When private property is abolished there will be no necessity for crime, no demand for it. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

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The Function of the State

THE state is to make what is useful. The individual is to make what is beautiful . . . It is mentally and morally injurious to man to do anything in which he does not find pleasure. . . .

Labour and Machinery

All unintellectual labour, all monotonous, dull labour, all labour that deals with dreadful things and involves unpleasant conditions, must be done by machinery. . . At present machinery competes against man. Under proper conditions machinery will serve man . . . just as trees grow while the country gentleman is asleep, so while Humanity will be amusing itself, or enjoying cultivated leisure—which, and not labour, is the aim of man—or making beautiful

things, or reading beautiful things, or simply contemplating the world with admiration and delight, machinery will be doing all the necessary and unpleasant work. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

Machinery the Slave of Man

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"KNOW Thyself" was written over the portal of the antique world. Over the portal of the new world, "Be Thyself" shall be written. And the message of Christ to man was simply "Be Thyself." That is the secret of Christ.

Christ's Message to Humanity "Be Thyself"

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WHEN Jesus talks about the poor he simply means personalities, just as when he talks about the rich he simply means people who have not developed personalities. Jesus moved in a community that allowed the accumulation of private property just as ours does, and the gospel that he preached was not that in such a community it is an advantage for a man to live on scanty, unwholesome food,

The Poor Have, the Rich Have Not, Personalities

to wear ragged, unwholesome clothes, to sleep in horrid, unwholesome dwellings, and a disadvantage for a man to live under healthy, pleasant, and decent conditions. . . . What Jesus meant, was this. He said to man, "You have a wonderful personality. Develop it. Be yourself. Don't imagine that your perfection lies in accumulating or possessing external things. Your perfection is inside of you. If only you could realise that you would not want to be rich. Ordinary riches can be stolen from a man. Real riches cannot. In the treasury-house of your soul there are infinitely precious things, that may not be taken from you. And so, try to so shape your life that external things will not harm you. And try also to get rid of personal property. It involves sordid preoccupation, endless industry, continual wrong. Personal property hinders Individualism at every step. . .

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Christ and Riches

THERE is only one class in the community that thinks more about money than the rich, and that is the poor. The poor can think of nothing else. That is the misery of being poor. What Jesus does say is that man reaches his perfection, not through what he has, not even through what he does, but entirely through what he is. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism.*

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Knowledge Versus Feeling

NAY, let us walk from fire unto fire
From passionate pain to deadlier delight,—
I am too young to live without desire,
Too young art thou to waste this summer night
Asking those idle questions which of old
Man sought of seer and oracle, and no reply was told.

For, sweet, to feel is better than to know,
And wisdom is a childless heritage,
One pulse of passion—youth's first fiery glow,—

Are worth the hoarded proverbs of the sage:
Vex not thy soul with dead philosophy,
Have we not lips to kiss with, hearts to love, and eyes to see!

Panthea. Poems.

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Man's Kinship with Nature: His Immortality

WE are resolved into the supreme air,
We are made one with what we touch and see,
With our heart's blood each crimson sun is fair,
With our young lives each spring impassioned tree
Flames into green, the wildest beasts that range
The moor our kinsman are, all life is one, and all is change.

With beat of systole and diastole
Our grand great life throbs through earth's giant heart,
And mighty waves of single Being roll
From nerveless germ to man, for we are part

Of every rock and bird and beast and hill,
One with the things that prey on us, and
one with what we kill.

From lower cells of waking life we pass
To full perfection; thus the world
grows old:
We who are godlike now were once a man
Of quivering purple flecked with bars
of gold,
Unsentient or of joy or misery,
And tossed in terrible tangles of some
wild and wind-swept sea.

This hot hard flame with which our
bodies burn
Will make some meadow blaze with
daffodil
Ay! and those august breasts of thine will
turn
To water-lilies; the brown fields men till
Will be more fruitful for our love to-night,
Nothing is lost in nature, all things live
in Death's despite.

* * * * * *

So when men bury us beneath the yew
Thy crimson-stained mouth a rose will be,
And thy soft eyes lush bluebells dimmed with dew,
And when the white narcissus wantonly
Kisses the wind its playmate some faint joy
Will thrill our dust, and we will be again fond maid and boy.

* * * * * *

And we two lovers shall not sit afar,
Critics of nature, but the joyous sea
Shall be our raiment, and the bearded star
Shoot arrows at our pleasure! We shall be
Part of the mighty universal whole,
And through all æons mix and mingle with the Kosmic Soul!

We shall be notes in that great Symphony
Whose cadence circles through the rhythmic spheres,

And all the live World's throbbing heart shall be
One with our heart, the stealthy creeping years
Have lost their terrors now, we shall not die,
The Universe itself shall be our Immortality.

Panthea. Poems.

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. . . . . But we, burnt out and cold,
See Honour smitten on the cheek, and gyves
Bind the sweet feet of Mercy: Poverty
Creeps through our sunless lanes and with sharp knives
Cuts the warm throats of children stealthily,
And no word said:—O we are wretched men
Unworthy of our great inheritance! where is the pen

The Evils of Modern Society

Of austere Milton? where the mighty sword
Which slew its master righteously? the years
Have lost their ancient leader, and no word
Breaks from the voiceless tripod on our ears:
While as a ruined mother in some spasm
Bears a base child and loathes it, so our best enthusiasm

Genders unlawful children, Anarchy
Freedom's own Judas, the vile prodigal
License who steals the gold of Liberty
And yet has nothing, Ignorance the real
One Fratricide since Cain, Envy the asp
That stings itself to Anguish, Avarice whose palsied grasp

Is in its extent stiffened, monied Greed
For whose dull appetite men waste away
Amid the whirr of wheels and are the seed
Of things which slay their sower, these each day

Sees rife in England, and the gentle feet
Of beauty tread no more the stones of each
unlovely street.

Humanitad. Poems.

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Art and Nature

MY own experience is that the more we study Art, the less we care for Nature. What Art really reveals to us is Nature's lack of design, her curious crudities, her extraordinary monotony, her absolute unfinished condition. Nature has good intentions, of course, but as Aristotle once said, she cannot carry them out. . . . It is fortunate for us, however, that Nature is so imperfect, as otherwise we should have had no Art at all. Art is our spirited protest, our gallant attempt to teach Nature her proper place. As for the infinite variety of Nature, that is a pure myth. It is not to be found in Nature herself. It resides in the imagination, or fancy, or cultivated blindness of the man who looks at her. *Intentions. The Decay of Lying.*

Consistency

WHO wants to be consistent? The dullard and the doctrinaire, the tedious people who carry out their principles to the bitter end of action, to the *reductio ad absurdum* of practice. Not I. Like Emerson, I write over the door of my library the word "Whim." *Intentions. The Decay of Lying.*

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Henry James

MR. Henry James writes fiction as if it were a painful duty, and wastes upon mean motives and imperceptible 'points of view' his neat literary style, his felicitous phases, his swift and caustic satire. *Intentions. The Decay of Lying.*

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Hall Caine

MR. Hall Caine, it is true, aims at the grandiose, but then he writes at the top of his voice. He is so loud that one cannot hear what he says. *Intentions. The Decay of Lying.*

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English Novelists

ENGLAND is the home of lost ideas. As for that great and daily increasing school of novelists for whom the sun always rises in the East End, the only thing that can be said about them is that they find life crude, and leave it raw. *Intentions. The Decay of Lying.*

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Emile Zola

M ZOLA, true to the lofty principle that he lays down in one of his pronunciamentos on literature, 'L'homme de génie n'a jamais d'esprit,' is determined to show that, if he has not got genius, he can at least be dull. And how well he succeeds! He is not without power. Indeed at times, as in *Germinal,* there is something almost epic in his work. But his work is entirely wrong from beginning to end, and wrong not on the ground of morals, but on the ground of art. From any ethical standpoint it is just what it should be. The author is perfectly truthful, and describes things exactly as they happen. What more can any moralist de-

sire? We have no sympathy at all with the moral indignation of our time against M. Zola. It is simply the indignation of Tartuffe on being exposed. But from the standpoint of art, what can be said in favour of the author of *L'Assommoir, Nana*, and *Pot-Bouille?* Nothing. Mr. Ruskin once described the characters in George Eliot's novels as being like the sweepings of a Pentonville omnibus, but M. Zola's characters are much worse. They have their dreary vices and their drearier virtues. The record of their lives is absolutely without interest. Who cares what happens to them? In literature we require distinction, charm, beauty, and imaginative power. We don't want to be harrowed and disgusted with an account of the doings of the lower orders. *Intentions. The Decay of Lying.*

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People—Real and Ideal

THE only real people are the people who never existed. . . The justification of a character in a novel is not

that other persons are what they are, but that the author is what he is. . . In point of fact what is interesting about people in good society . . is the mask that each one of them wears, not the reality that lies behind the mask. *Intentions. The Decay of Lying.*

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George Meredith

AH! Meredith! Who can define him? His style is chaos illumined by flashes of lightning. As a writer he has mastered everything except language: as a novelist he can do everything, except tell a story: as an artist he is everything, except articulate. Somebody in Shakespeare —Touchstone, I think—talks about a man who is always breaking his shins over his own wit, and it seems to me that this might serve as a basis for a criticism of Meredith's method. But whatever he is, he is not a realist. Or, rather, I would say that he is a child of realism who is not on speaking terms with his father. By delib-

erate choice he has made himself a romanticist. He has refused to bow the knee to Baal and after all, even if the man's fine spirit did not revolt against the noisy assertions of realism, his style would be quite sufficient of itself to keep life at a respectful distance. By its means he has planted round his garden a hedge full of thorns, and red with wonderful roses.

Intentions. The Decay of Lying.

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Balzac

AS for Balzac, he was a most remarkable combination of the artistic temperament with the scientific spirit. The latter he bequeathed to his disciples: the former was entirely his own. The difference between such a book as M. Zola's *L'Assommoir* and Balzac's *Illusions Perdues* is the difference between unimaginate realism and imaginative reality, "All Balzac's characters," said Baudelaire, "are gifted with the same ardour of life that animated himself. All his fictions are as deeply coloured as dreams. Each mind

is a weapon loaded to the muzzle with will. The very scullions have genius." A steady course of Balzac reduces our living friends to shadows, and our acquaintances to the shadows of shades. His characters have a kind of fervent fiery-colored existence. They dominate us, and defy scepticism. One of the greatest tragedies of my life is the death of Lucien de Rubempré. It is a grief from which I have never been able to completely rid myself. It haunts me in my moments of pleasure. I remember it when I laugh. But Balzac is no more a realist than Holbein was. He created life, he did not copy it. I admit, however, that he set far too high a value on modernity of form, and that, consequently, there is no book of his that, as an artistic masterpiece, can rank with *Salambô* or *Esmond*, or *The Cloister and The Hearth*, or the *Vicomte de Bragelonne*.

Intentions. The Decay of Lying.

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The Influence of Art on Life

Nature and Life

The Stages of Art's Development

THE popular cry of our time is 'Let us return to Life and Nature; they will recreate Art for us, and send the red blood coursing through our veins; they will shoe her feet with swiftness and make her hand strong.' But, alas! we are mistaken in our amiable and well-meaning efforts.

Nature is always behind the age. And as for life, she is the solvent that breaks up Art, the enemy that lays waste her house. . . . Art begins with abstract decoration, with purely imaginative and pleasurable work dealing with what is unreal and non-existent. This is the first stage. Then life becomes fascinated with this new wonder, and asks to be admitted into the charmed circle. Art takes life as part of her rough material, recreates it, and refashions it in fresh forms, is absolutely indifferent to fact—invents, imagines, dreams, and keeps between herself and reality the impenetrable barrier of beautiful style, of decorative or ideal treatment. The third stage is where Life gets the upper hand, and drives Art out into the

wilderness. This is the true decadence, and it is from this that we are now suffering . . . A cultured Mahomedan once remarked to us, 'You Christians are so occupied in misinterpreting the fourth commandment that you have never thought of making an artistic application of the second.' He was perfectly right, and the whole truth of the matter is this: The proper school to learn Art in is not Life but Art. *Intentions. The Decay of Lying.*

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The Modern Melo-Drama

THE characters in these plays talk exactly as they would talk off it; they have neither aspirations nor aspirates; they are taken directly from life and reproduce its vulgarity down to the smallest detail; they present the gait, manner, costume, and accent of real people; they would pass unnoticed in a third-class railway-carriage. And yet how wearisome the plays are! They do succeed in producing even that impression of reality at

which they aim, and which is their only reason for existing. As a method, realism is a complete failure.

Intentions. The Decay of Lying.

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The Coming Liar

BORED by the tedious and improving conversation of those who have neither the wit to exaggerate nor the genius to romance; tired of the intelligent person whose reminiscences are always based upon memory, whose statements are invariably limited by probability, and who is at any time liable to be corroborated by the merest Philistine who happens to be present, Society sooner or later must return to its lost leader, the cultured and fascinating liar. Who he was who first, without ever having gone out to the rude chase, told the wandering cavemen at sunset how he had dragged the Megatherium from the purple darkness of its jasper case, or slain the Mammoth in single combat and brought back its gilded tusks, we cannot tell, and not one of our modern an-

thropologists, for all their much-boasted science, has had the ordinary courage to tell us. Whatever was his name or race, he certainly was the true founder of social intercourse. For the aim of the liar is simply to charm, to delight, to give pleasure. He is the very basis of civilised society, and without him a dinner party, even at the mansions of the great, is as dull as a lecture at the Royal Society . . . Nor will he be welcomed by society alone. Art, breaking from the prison-house of realism, will run to greet him, and will kiss his false, beautiful lips, knowing that he alone is in possession of the great secret of all her manifestations, the secret that Truth is entirely and absolutely a matter of style; while life—poor probable, uninteresting human life . . . will follow meekly after him, and try to reproduce, in her own simple and untutored way, some of the marvels of which he talks. *Intentions. The Decay of Lying.*

Truth—Entirely and Absolutely a Matter of Style

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ART finds her own perfection within, and not outside of, herself. She is not to be judged by any external standard of resemblance. She is a veil, rather than a mirror. She has flowers that no forests know of, birds that no woodland possesses. She makes and unmakes many worlds, and can draw the moon from heaven with a scarlet thread. Hers are the 'forms more real than living man,' and hers the great archetypes of which things that have existence are but unfinished copies. Nature has, in her eyes, no laws, no uniformity. She can work miracles at her will, and when she calls monsters from the deep they come. She can bid the almond tree blossom in the winter, and send the snow upon the ripe cornfield. At her word the frost lays its silver finger on the burning mouth of June, and the winged lions creep out from the hollows of the Lydian hills. The dryads peer from the thicket as she passes by, and the brown fauns smile strangely at her when she comes near them. She

has hawk-faced gods that worship her, and the centaurs gallop at her side.

Intentions. The Decay of Lying.

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ART never expresses anything but itself . . . Of course, nations and individuals, with that healthy natural vanity which is the secret of existence, are always under the impression that it is of them that the Muses are talking, always trying to find in the calm dignity of imaginative art some mirror of their own turbid passions, always forgetting that the singer of life is not Apollo but Marsyas. Remote from reality, and with her eyes turned away from the shadows of the cave, Art reveals her own perfection, and the wondering crowd that watches the opening of the marvellous, many-petalled rose fancies that it is its own history that is being told to it, its own spirit that is finding expression in a new form. But it is not so. The highest art rejects the burden of the human spirit,

Art not the expression of any age, but of its own Perfection simply

and gains more from a new medium or a fresh material than she does from any enthusiasm for art, or from any lofty passion, or from any great awakening of the human consciousness. She develops purely on her own lines. She is not symbolic of any age. It is the ages that are her symbols. *Intentions. The Decay of Lying.*

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Contemplation—the doing nothing is the most difficult thing to do

SOCIETY often forgives the criminal; it never forgives the dreamer . . . To do nothing at all is the most difficult thing in the world, the most difficult and the most intellectual. To Plato, with his passion for wisdom, this was the noblest form of energy. To Aristotle, with his passion for knowledge, this was the noblest form of energy also. It was to this that the passion for holiness led the saint and the mystic of mediæval days . . . It is to do nothing that the elect exist. Action is limited and relative. Unlimited and absolute is the vision of him who

sits at ease and watches, who walks in loneliness and dreams . . . the contemplative life, the life that has for its aim not *doing* but *being*, and not *being* merely, but *becoming*—that is what the critical spirit can give us. *Intentions. The Critic as Artist.*

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The Practical Life the way of ignorance Ours is the age of overwork and under-education

WITH us, Thought is degraded by its constant association with practice. Who that moves in the stress and tumult of actual existence, noisy politician, or crawling social reformer, or poor narrow-minded priest blinded by the sufferings of that omnipotent section of the community among whom he has cast his lot, can seriously claim to be able to form a disinterested intellectual judgment about any one thing? Each of the professions means a prejudice. The necessity for a career forces every one to take sides. We live in the age of the over-worked, and the under-educated; the age in which people are so industrious that they become ab-

solutely stupid . . . The sure way of knowing nothing about life is to try to make oneself useful. *Intentions. The Critic as Artist.*

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The great want of modern times is unpractical people

WHAT we want are unpractical people who are beyond the moment, and think beyond the day. Those who try to lead the people can only do so by following the mob. It is through the voice of one crying in the wilderness that the ways of the gods must be prepared.

Intentions. The Critic as Artist.

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Form is the Inspirer of all Great Art

IT is not merely in art that the body is the soul. In every sphere of life form is the beginning of things. The rhythmic harmonious gestures of dancing convey, Plato tells us, both rhythm and harmony into the mind. Forms are the food of faith, cried Newman in one of those great moments of sincerity that made us admire and know the man. He was right,

though he may not have known how terribly right he was. The Creeds are believed, not because they are rational, but because they are repeated. Yes: Form is everything. It is the secret of life. Find expression for a sorrow, and it will become dear to you. Find expression for a joy, and you intensify its ecstasy. Do you wish to love? Use Love's Litany, and the words will create the yearning from which the world fancies that they spring. Have you a grief that corrodes your heart? Steep yourself in the language of grief, learn its utterance from Prince Hamlet and Queen Constance, and you will find that mere expression is a mode of consolation, and that form, which is the birth of passion, is also the death of pain. And so, to return to the sphere of Art, it is form that creates not merely the critical temperament, but also the æsthetic instinct, that unerring instinct that reveals to one all things under their conditions of beauty. Start with the worship of form, and there is no secret in

The Poet's Real Passion Ruins his Art. For him to be Natural is to be obvious, and to be obvious is to be inartistic

art that will not be revealed to you, and remember that in criticism, as in creation, temperament is everything, and that it is, not by the time of their production, but by the temperaments to which they appeal, that the schools of art should be historically grouped.

Intentions. The Critic as Artist.

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Reformation of the People

IT is always with the best intentions that the worst work is done . . . when a man reaches the age of forty, or becomes a Royal Academician, or is elected a member of the Athenæum Club, or is recognized as a popular novelist, whose books are in great demand at suburban railway stations, one may have the amusement of exposing him, but one cannot have the pleasure of reforming him. And this is, I dare say, very fortunate for him; for I have no doubt that reformation is a much more painful process than punishment, is indeed punishment in its most aggravated and moral form—a fact which

accounts for our entire failure as a community to reclaim that interesting phenomenon who is called the confirmed criminal.

Intentions. The Critic as Artist.

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Creators cannot be Good Appreciators

IT is exactly because a man cannot do a thing that he is the proper judge of it . . . Creation limits, while contemplation widens, the vision . . . That very concentration of vision that makes a man an artist; limits by sheer intensity his faculty of fine appreciation . . . The gods are hidden from each other . . . A great artist cannot recognise the beauty of a work different from his own . . . The æsthetic critic and the æsthetic critic alone, can appreciate all forms and modes.

Intentions. The Critic as Artist.

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Rudyard Kipling

AS one turns over the pages of his *Plain Tales from the Hills*, one feels as if one were seated under a palm-tree

reading life by superb flashes of vulgarity. The bright colours of the bazaars dazzle one's eyes. The jaded, second-rate Anglo-Indians are in exquisite incongruity with their surroundings. The mere lack of style in the story-teller gives an odd journalistic realism to what he tells us. From the point of view of literature Mr. Kipling is a genius who drops his aspirates. From the point of view of life, he is a reporter who knows vulgarity better than any one has ever known it. Dickens knew its clothes and its comedy. Mr. Kipling knows its essence and its seriousness. He is our first authority on the second-rate, and has seen marvellous things through key-holes, and his backgrounds are real works of art.

Intentions. The Critic as Artist.

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What Criticism Does

IT is Criticism, as Arnold points out, that creates the intellectual atmosphere of the age. It is Criticism . . . that makes the mind a fine instrument . . .

It is Criticism, again, that, by concentration, makes culture possible. It takes the cumbersome mass of creative work, and distils it into a finer essence . . . The thread that is to guide us across the wearisome labyrinth is in the hands of Criticism. Nay more, where there is no record, and history is either lost or was never written, Criticism can recreate the past for us from the very smallest fragment of language or art, just as surely as the man of science can from some tiny bone, or the mere impress of a foot upon a rock, recreate for us the winged dragon or the Titan lizard that once made the earth shake beneath its tread, can call Behemoth out of his cave, and make Leviathan swim once more across the startled sea. Prehistoric history belongs to the philological and archæological critic. It is to him that the origins of things are revealed. The self-conscious deposits of an age are nearly always misleading . . . It is Criticism that makes us cosmopolitan . . . It is

only by the cultivation of the habit of intellectual criticism that we shall be able to rise superior to race prejudices . . . Criticism will annihilate race-prejudices, by insisting upon the unity of the human mind in the variety of its forms . . . It is Criticism that, recognising no position as final, and refusing to bind itself by the shallow shibboleths of any sect or school, creates that serene philosophic temper which loves truth for its own sake, and loves it not the less because it knows it to be unattainable.

Intentions. The Critic as Artist.

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Injustice and Justice

THERE is only one thing worse than Injustice, and that is Justice without her sword in her hand. When Right is not Might, it is Evil.

Intentions. The Critic as Artist.

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War

IF we are tempted to make war upon another nation, we shall remember that we are seeking to destroy an element

of our own culture, and possibly its most important element. As long as war is regarded as wicked, it will always have its fascination. When it is looked upon as vulgar, it will cease to be popular.

Intentions. The Critic as Artist.

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Æsthetics versus Ethics

ÆSTHETICS are higher than Ethics. They belong to a more spiritual sphere. To discern the beauty of a thing is the finest point to which we can arrive. Even a colour-sense is more important, in the development of the individual, than a sense of right and wrong. Æsthetics, in fact, are to Ethics, in the sphere of conscious civilization, what, in the sphere of the external world, sexual is to natural selection. Ethics, like natural selection, make existence possible. Æsthetics, like sexual selection, make life lovely and wonderful, fill it with new forms, and give it progress, and variety, and change.

Intentions. The Critic as Artist.

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It is not the moment that makes the man, but the man who creates the age

AN age that has no criticism is either an age in which art is immobile, hieratic, and confined to the reproduction of formal types, or an age that possesses no art at all. There have been critical ages that have not been creative, in the ordinary sense of the word, ages in which the spirit of man has sought to set in order the treasures of his treasure-house, to separate the gold from the silver, and the silver from the lead, to count over the jewels, and to give names to the pearls. But there has never been a creative age that has not been critical also. For it is the critical faculty that invents fresh forms. The tendency of creation is to repeat itself. It is to the critical instinct that we owe each new school that springs up, each new mould that art finds ready to its hand.

The Critic as Creator

Intentions. The Critic as Artist.

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IT is very much more difficult to talk about a thing than to do it . . .

Anybody can make history. Only a great man can write it . . . The one duty we owe to history is to rewrite it . . . It is because Humanity has never known where it was going that it has been able to find its way . . . When man acts he is a puppet. When he describes he is a poet. The whole secret lies in that. It was easy enough on the sandy plains by windy Ilion to send the notched arrow from the painted bow, or to hurl against the shield of hide and flame-like brass the long ash-handled spear. It was easy for the adulterous queen to spread the Tyrian carpets for her lord, and then, as he lay couched in the marble bath, to throw over his head the purple net, and call to her smooth-faced lover to stab through the meshes at the heart that should have broken, at Aulis. For Antigone even with death waiting for her as her bridegroom, it was easy to pass through the tainted air at noon, and climb the hill, and strew with kindly earth the wretched naked corse that had no tomb. But

The Writing of History

Acting and Describing

what of those who write about these things? What of those who gave them reality, and made them live forever? Are they not greater than the men and women they sing of? "Hector that sweet knight is dead," and Lucian tells us how in the dim underworld Menippus saw the bleaching skull of Helen, and marvelled that it was for so grim a favour that all those honoured ships were launched, those beautiful mailed men laid low, those towered cities brought to dust. Yet every day the swan-like daughter of Leda comes out on the battlements, and looks down at the tide of war. The graybeards wonder at her loveliness, and she stands by the side of the king. In his chamber of stained ivory lies her leman. He is polishing his dainty armour, and combing the scarlet plume. With squire and page, her husband passes from tent to tent. She can see his bright hair, and hears, or fancies that she hears, that clear cold voice. In the courtyard below, the son of Priam is buckling on his brazen cuirass. The white arms of

Andromache are around his neck. He sets his helmet on the ground, lest their babe should be frightened. Behind the embroidered curtains of his pavilion sits Achilles, in perfumed raiment, while in harness of gilt and silver the friend of his soul arrays himself to go forth to the fight. From a curiously carven chest that his mother Thetis had brought to his ship-side, the Lord of the Myrmidons takes out that mystic chalice that the lip of man had never touched, and cleanses it with brimstone, and with fresh water cools it, and, having washed his hands, fills with black wine its burnished hollow, and spills the thick grape-blood upon the ground in honour of Him whom at Dodona bare-footed prophets worshipped, and prays to Him, and knows not that he prays in vain, and that by the hands of two Knights from Troy, Panthous's son, Euphorbus, whose lovelocks were looped with gold, and the Priamid, the lion-hearted, Patroklus, the comrade of comrades, must meet his doom. Phantoms, are they? Heroes

of mist and mountain? Shadows in a song? No: they are real. Action! What is action? It dies at the moment of the energy. It is a bare concession to fact. The world is made by the singer for the dreamer . . .

Literature the highest and greatest of the visible arts

On the mouldering citadel of Troy lies the lizard like a thing of green bronze. The owl has built her nest in the palace of Priam. Over the empty plain wander shepherd and goat herd with their flocks, and where, on the wine-surfaced, oily sea, *οἰνοψ πόντος*, as Homer calls it, copper-pressed and streaked with vermilion, the great galleys of the Danaoi came in their gleaming crescent, the lonely tunney-fisher sits in his little boat and watches the bobbing corks of his net. Yet, every morning the doors of the city are thrown open, and on foot, or in horse-drawn chariot, the warriors go forth to battle, and mock their enemies from behind their iron masks. All day long the fight rages, and when night comes the torches gleam by the tents, and the crescent burns in the hall. Those who

live in marble or on painted panel, know of life but a single exquisite instant, eternal indeed in its beauty, but limited to one note of passion, or one mood of calm. Those whom the past makes live have their myriad emotions of joy and terror, of courage and despair, of pleasure and of suffering. The seasons come and go in glad or saddening pageant, and with winged or leaden feet the years pass before them. They have their youth and their manhood, they are children and they grow old. It is always dawn for St. Helena, as Veronese saw her at the window. Through the still morning air the angels bring her the symbol of God's pain. The cool breezes of the morning lift the gilt threads from her brow. On that little hill by the city of Florence, where the lovers of Giorgione are lying, it is always the solstice of noon, of noon made so languorous by summer suns that hardly can the slim naked girl dip into the marble tank the round bubble of clear glass, and the long fingers of the lute-player rest idly

upon the chords. It is twilight always for the dancing nymphs whom Corot set free among the silver poplars of France. In eternal twilight they move, those frail diaphanous figures, whose tremulous white feet seem not to touch the dew-drenched grass they tread on. But those who walk in epos, drama, or romance, see through the labouring months the young moons wax and wane, and watch the night from evening unto morning star, and from sunrise unto sunsetting can note the shifting day with all its gold and shadow. For them, as for us, the flowers bloom and wither, and the Earth, that green-tressed Goddess, as Coleridge calls her, alters her raiment for their pleasure. The statue is concentrated to one moment of perfection. The image stained upon the canvas possesses no spiritual element of growth or change. If they know nothing of death, it is because they know little of life, for the secrets of life and death belong to those, and those only, whom the sequence of time affects, and who possess

not merely the present but the future, and can rise or fall from a past of glory or of shame. Movement, that problem of the visible arts, can be truly realised by Literature alone. It is Literature that shows us the body in its swiftness and the soul in its unrest.

Intentions. The Critic as Artist.

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Criticism a creative art, and the record of one's soul

IT is more fascinating than history, as it is concerned simply with oneself. It is more delightful than philosophy, as its subject is concrete and not abstract, real and not vague. It is the only civilized form of autobiography, as it deals not with events, but with the thoughts of one's life; not with life's physical accidents of deed or circumstance, but with the spiritual moods and imaginative passions of the mind . . . The highest criticism deals with art not as expressive but as impressive purely . . . It treats the work of art simply as a starting point for a new creation. It does not con-

fine itself—let us at least suppose so for the moment—to discovering the real intention of the artist and accepting that as final. And in this it is right, for the meaning of any beautiful created thing is, at least, as much in the soul of him who looks at it, as it was in his soul who wrought it. Nay, it is rather the beholder who lends to the beautiful thing its acquired meanings, and makes it marvellous for us, and sets it in some new relation to the age, so that it becomes a vital portion of our lives and a symbol of what we pray for, or perhaps of what, having prayed for, we fear that we may receive . . . Beauty has as many meanings as a man has moods. Beauty is the symbol of symbols. Beauty reveals everything, because it expresses nothing. When it shows us itself, it shows us the whole fiery-coloured world.

Intentions. The Critic as Artist.

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FROM his childhood he had been as one filled with the perfect knowledge of God, and even while he was but yet as a lad, many of the saints as well as certain holy women who dwelt in the free city of his birth, had been stirred to much wonder by the grave wisdom of his answers. And when his parents had given him the robe and the ring of manhood he kissed them, and left them and went out into the world, that he might speak to the world about God. For there were at that time many in the world who either knew not God at all, or had but an incomplete knowledge of Him, or worshipped the false gods who dwell in groves and have no care of their worshippers.

And he set his face to the sun and journeyed, walking without sandals, as he had seen the saints walk, and carrying at his girdle a leathern wallet and a little water bottle of burnt clay.

And as he walked along the highway he was full of the joy that comes from the perfect knowledge of God and he sang

The Highest Wisdom is the Love of God, not the knowledge of God

praises unto God without ceasing; and after a time he reached a strange land in which there were many cities.

And he passed through eleven cities. And some of these cities were in valleys, and others were by the banks of great rivers, and others were set on hills. And in each city he found a disciple who loved him and followed him, and a great multitude also of people followed him from each city, and the knowledge of God spread in the whole land, and many of the rulers were converted, and the priests of the temples in which there were idols found that half of their gain was gone, and when they beat upon their drums at noon none, or but few, came with peacocks and with offerings of flesh as had been the custom of the land before his coming.

Yet the more the people followed him, and the greater the number of his disciples, the greater became his sorrow. And he knew not why his sorrow was so great. For he spake ever about God, and out of

the fulness of that perfect knowledge of God which God had himself given to him. And one evening he passed out of the eleventh city, which was a city of Armenia, and his disciples and a great crowd of people followed after him; and he went up on to a mountain and sat down on a rock that was on the mountain, and his disciples stood round him, and the multitude knelt in the valley.

And he bowed his head in his hands and wept, and said to his Soul, "Why is it that I am full of sorrow and fear, and that each of my disciples is as an enemy that walks in the noonday?"

And his Soul answered him and said, "God filled thee with the perfect knowledge of Himself, and thou hast given this knowledge away to others. The pearl of great price thou hast divided, and the vesture without seam thou has parted asunder. He who giveth away wisdom robbeth himself. He is as one who giveth his treasure to a robber. Is not God wiser than thou art? Who art thou to give

away the secret that God told thee? I was rich once and thou hast made me poor. Once I saw God and now thou hast hidden Him from me."

And he wept again, for he knew that his Soul spake truth to him, and that he had given to others the perfect knowledge of God, and that he was as one clinging to the skirts of God, and that his faith was leaving him by reason of the number of those who believed in him.

And he said to himself, "I will talk no more about God. He who giveth away wisdom robbeth himself."

And after the space of some hours his disciples came near to him and bowed themselves to the ground and said, "Master, talk to us about God, for thou hast the perfect knowledge of God, and no man save thee hath this knowledge."

And he answered them and said, "I will talk to you about all other things that are in heaven and on earth, but about God I will not talk to you. Neither now, nor at any time, will I talk to you about God."

And they were wroth with him and said to him, "Thou hast led us into the desert that we might hearken to thee. Wilt thou send us away hungry, and the great multitude that thou hast made to follow thee?"

And he answered them and said, "I will not talk to you about God."

And the multitude murmured against him and said to him, "Thou hast led us into the desert, and hast given us no food to eat. Talk to us about God and it will suffice us."

But he answered them not a word. For he knew that if he spake to them about God he would give away his treasure.

And his disciples went away sadly, and the multitude of people returned to their own homes. And many died on the way.

And when he was alone he rose up and set his face to the moon, and journeyed for seven moons, speaking to no man nor making any answer. And when the seventh moon had waned he reached that desert which is the desert of the Great

River. And having found a cavern in which a Centaur had once dwelt, he took it for his place of dwelling, and made himself a mat of reeds on which to lie, and became a Hermit. And every hour the Hermit praised God that He had suffered him to keep some knowledge of Him and His wonderful greatness.

Now, one evening, as the Hermit was seated before the cavern he had made his place of dwelling, he beheld a young man of evil and beautiful face who passed by in mean apparel and with empty hands. Every evening with empty hands the young man passed by, and every morning he returned with his hands full of purple and pearls. For he was a Robber and robbed the caravans of the merchants.

And the Hermit looked at him and pitied him. But he spake not a word. For he knew that he who speaks a word loses his faith.

And one morning as the young man returned with his hands full of purple and pearls, he stopped and frowned and

stamped his foot upon the sand, and said to the Hermit: "Why do you look at me in this manner ever as I pass by? What is it that I see in your eyes? For no man has looked at me before in this manner. And the thing is a thorn and a trouble to me."

And the Hermit answered him and said, "What you see in my eyes is pity. Pity is what looks out at you from my eyes."

And the young man laughed with scorn, and cried to the Hermit in a bitter voice, and said to him, "I have purple and pearls in my hands, and you have but a mat of reeds on which to lie. What pity should you have for me? And for what reason have you this pity?"

"I have pity for you," said the Hermit, "because you have no knowledge of God."

"Is this knowledge of God a precious thing?" asked the young man, and he came close to the mouth of the cavern.

"It is more precious than all the purple and pearls in the world," answered the Hermit.

"And have you got it?" said the young Robber, and he came closer still.

"Once, indeed," answered the Hermit, "I possessed the perfect knowledge of God. But in my foolishness I parted with it, and divided it amongst others. Yet even now is such knowledge as remains to me more precious than purple or pearls."

And when the young Robber heard this he threw away the purple and the pearls that he was bearing in his hands, and drawing a sharp sword of curved steel he said to the Hermit, "Give me, forthwith, this knowledge of God that you possess, or I will surely slay you. Wherefore should I not slay him who has a treasure greater than my treasure?"

And the Hermit spread out his arms and said, "Were it not better for me to go unto the outermost courts of God and praise Him, than to live in the world and have no knowledge of Him? Slay me if that be your desire. But I will not give away my knowledge of God."

And the young Robber knelt down and besought him, but the Hermit would not talk to him about God, nor give him his treasure, and the young Robber rose up and said to the Hermit, "Be it as you will. As for me I will go to the City of the Seven Sins, that is but three days' journey from this place, and for my purple they will give me pleasure, and for my pearls they will sell me joy." And he took up the purple and the pearls and went swiftly away.

And the Hermit cried out and followed him and besought him. For the space of three days he followed the young Robber on the road and entreated him to return, nor to enter into the City of the Seven Sins.

And ever and anon the young Robber looked back at the Hermit and called to him, and said, "Will you give me this knowledge of God which is more precious than purple and pearls? If you will give me that I will not enter the city."

And ever did the Hermit answer, "All

things that I have I will give thee, save that one thing only. For that thing it is not lawful for me to give away."

And in the twilight of the third day they came nigh to the great scarlet gates of the City of the Seven Sins. And from the city there came the noise of much laughter.

And the young Robber laughed in answer, and sought to knock at the gate. And as he did so the Hermit ran forward and caught him by the skirts of his raiment, and said to him, "Stretch forth your hands, and set your arms around my neck, and put your ear close to my lips, and I will give you what remains to me of the knowledge of God." And the young Robber stopped.

And when the Hermit had given away his knowledge of God, he fell upon the ground and wept, and a great darkness hid from him the city and the young Robber, so that he saw them no more.

And as he lay there weeping he was aware of One who was standing beside

him; and he who was standing beside him had feet of brass and hair like fine wool. And He raised the Hermit up, and said to him: "Before this time thou had'st the perfect knowledge of God. Now thou shalt have the perfect love of God. Wherefore art thou weeping?" And He kissed him. *Poems in Prose.*

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WHEN Narcissus died the pool of his pleasure changed from a cup of sweet waters into a cup of salt tears, and the Oreads came weeping through the woodland that they might sing to the pool and give it comfort.

And when they saw that the pool had changed from a cup of sweet waters into a cup of salt tears, they loosened the green tresses of their hair and cried to the pool and said, "We do not wonder that you should mourn in this manner for Narcissus, so beautiful was he."

"But was Narcissus beautiful?" said the pool.

We love those who agree with us and who show us our own beauties The master flatterer is always acceptable

"Who should know that better than you?" answered the Oreads. "Us did he ever pass by, but you he sought for, and would lie on your banks and look down at you, and in the mirror of your waters he would mirror his own beauty."

And the pool answered, "But I loved Narcissus because, as he lay on my banks and looked down at me, in the mirror of his eyes I saw ever my own beauty mirrored." *Poems in Prose.*

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Out of the strong comes forth the sweet

ONE evening there came into his soul the desire to fashion an image of THE PLEASURE THAT ABIDETH FOR A MOMENT. And he went forth into the world to look for bronze. For he could only think in bronze.

But all the bronze of the whole world had disappeared, nor anywhere in the world was there any bronze to be found, save only the bronze of the image of THE SORROW THAT ENDURETH FOR EVER.

Now this image he had himself, and with his own hands, fashioned, and had set it on the tomb of the one thing he had loved in life. On the tomb of the dead thing he had most loved had he set this image of his own fashioning, that it might serve as a sign of the love of man that dieth not, and a symbol of the sorrow of man that endureth for ever. And in the whole world there was no other bronze save the bronze of this image.

And he took the image he had fashioned, and set it in a great furnace, and gave it to the fire.

Pleasure is the child of Pain

And out of the bronze of the image of THE SORROW THAT ENDURETH FOR EVER he fashioned an image of THE PLEASURE THAT ABIDETH FOR A MOMENT. *Poems in Prose.*

++

The desire for Love

WHEN you really want love, you will find it waiting for you.

De Profundis.

THE faith that others give to what is unseen, I give to what one can touch and look at. My gods dwell in temples made with hands; and within the circle of actual experience is my creed made perfect and complete: too complete, it may be, for like many or all of those who have placed their heaven in this earth, I have found in it not merely the beauty of heaven, but the horror of hell also. When I think about religion at all, I feel as if I would like to found an order for those who *cannot* believe: the Confraternity of the Faithless, one might call it, where on an altar, on which no taper burned, a priest, in whose heart peace had no dwelling, might celebrate with unblessed bread and a chalice empty of wine. Everything to be true must become a religion . . . Only that is spiritual which makes its own form. If I may not find its secret within myself, I shall never find it: if I have not got it already, it will never come to me.

De Profundis.

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NOT to be mained, marred, and incomplete . . . to absorb into my nature all that has been done to me, to make it part of me, to accept it without complaint, fear, or reluctance. The supreme vice is shallowness. Whatever is realised is right . . . To regret one's own experiences is to arrest one's own development. To deny one's own experiences is to put a lie into the lips of one's own life. It is no less than a denial of the soul. For just as the body absorbs things of all kinds, things common and unclean no less than those that the priest or a vision has cleansed, and converts them into swiftness or strength, into the play of beautiful muscles and the moulding of fair flesh, into the curves and colours of the hair, the lips, the eyes; so the soul in its turn has the nutritive functions also, and can transform into noble records of thought and passions of high import what in itself is base, cruel, and degrading; nay, more, may find in these its most august modes of assertion, and can often

The important thing to do in life

reveal itself most perfectly through what was intended to desecrate or destroy.

De Profundis.

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PROSPERITY, pleasure, and success, may be rough of grain and common in fibre, but sorrow is the most sensitive of all created things. There is no thing that stirs in the whole world of thought to which sorrow does not vibrate in terrible and exquisite pulsation. The thin beaten-out leaf of tremulous gold that chronicles the direction of forces the eye cannot see is in comparison coarse. It is a wound that bleeds when any hand but that of love touches it, and even then must bleed again, though not in pain.

Where there is sorrow there is holy ground.

De Profundis.

++

IS it thy will that I should wax and wane,
Barter my cloth of gold for hodden grey,

And at thy pleasure weave that web of pain
Whose brightest threads are each a wasted day?

Is it thy will—Love that I love so well—
That my Soul's House shall be a tortured spot
Wherein, like evil paramours, must dwell
The quenchless flame, the worm that dieth not?

Nay, if it be thy will I shall endure,
And sell ambition at the common mart,
And let dull fortune be my vestiture,
And sorrow dig its grave within my heart.

Perchance it may be better so—at least
I have not made my heart a heart of stone,
Nor starved my boyhood of its goodly feast,
Nor walked where Beauty is a thing unknown.

It is better to have known Love than to realise all one's ambitions Better to have seen Beauty face to face and failed in life than be the most successful of men

Many a man hath done so; sought to fence
In straitened bonds the soul that should be free,
Trodden the dusty roads of common sense,
While all the forest sang of liberty,

Not marking how the spotted hawk in flight
Passed on wide pinion through the lofty air,
To where some steep untrodden mountain height
Caught the last tresses of the Sun God's hair.

Or how the little flower he trod upon,
The daisy, that white-feathered shield of gold,
Followed with wistful eyes the wandering sun
Content if once its leaves were aureoled.

But surely it is something to have been
The best beloved for a little while,

To have walked hand in hand with Love, and seen
His purple wings flit once across thy smile.

Ah! though the gorged asp of passion feed
On my boy's heart, yet have I burst the bars,
Stood face to face with Beauty, known indeed
The Love which moves the sun and all the stars!

Poems.

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Beauty can never grow old

ALL beautiful things belong to the same age.

Intentions. Pen, Pencil, and Poison.

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